

Some Implications of Deployment of US B-52 Bombers in Thailand*

Summary

Deployment of USAF B-52 bombers in Thailand would increase only slightly the level of US Air Force operations from Thai bases, which have been averaging over 4,000 sorties a month against targets in North Vietnam. In contrast, B-52 operations from Guam against targets in Vietnam (mostly South Vietnam) have been averaging only 400 sorties a month. USAF has been flying strikes against North Vietnam from Thai bases since March 1965. More than one-fourth of the US attack air O.B. is currently operating out of Thailand. About 300 fixed wing combat-reconnaissance aircraft, comprising about one-fourth of US attack air O.B. in Southeast Asia, currently operate out of Thailand. Deployment of the B-52 bombers also would not add much to the total US military presence in Thailand, which has grown from 4,000 to 35,000 men during the last three years.

The use of a base in Thailand for B-52 strikes in South Vietnam would shorten the present 12-hour round trip from Guam to about 2-1/2 hours, decrease the aircraft operating costs from ten million dollars to two million dollars a month, and would permit a much more rapid reaction time for ground support operations in South Vietnam.

USAF review completed.

* Except for the TOP SECRET data on projected deployments of US military personnel in Thailand (Table IV), the information in this memorandum is SECRET.

USAF Declass/Release Instructions On File

I. USAF Use of Thailand

A. Early Decision Likely

With respect to the proposed deployment of B-52 bombers to Thailand several cogent points should be considered:

1. The US has not yet officially requested the government of Thailand for use of Thai bases for the B-52 bombers.
2. The Secretary of Defense has yet to make a decision on this matter but a decision probably will be reached before the weekend (31 December 1966) to propose this to the President.
3. The President and the Secretary of Defense will discuss this matter over the weekend (31 December 1966) and possibly make a decision concerning the request of B-52's using Thai bases.
4. Speculation that 15 of the 50 B-52's currently stationed on Guam will be deployed to Thailand for quick reaction purposes comes from press sources and can't be substantiated.

B. USAF Operations in Thailand

1. The US Air Force currently operates 420 aircraft (including 300 fixed wing combat-reconnaissance aircraft) out of seven airbases in Thailand. (See map.) The US has been using Thai bases to launch strikes against North Vietnam (and Laos) since March 1965. During the first nine months of 1966, 36 percent of all US sorties flown over North Vietnam originated from Thai bases (see Table I). According to unofficial estimates, 55 percent of the JCS targets struck during 1966 were hit by USAF aircraft based in

Thailand. More than one-fourth of the current US attack air O.B. in

Southeast Asia is currently operating out of Thailand, as shown in

Table II below:

Table 1

Distribution Total Sorties Flown Against North Vietnam
by Launch Base, January-September 1966

	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Sorties</u>
USN (Carriers)	44	46,600
USAF (Thailand)	36	38,200
USAF (SVN)*	20	21,200
	<u>100</u>	<u>106,000</u>

* Also includes VNAF, USMC which amount to approximately 4 percent of total sorties flown.

Table II

Southeast Asia Fixed Wing Combat-Reconnaissance, Aircraft OB - by Type
December 1966

<u>Type Aircraft</u>	<u>Thailand (USAF)</u>	<u>South Vietnam (USAF-USMC)</u>	<u>Carriers (USN)</u>	<u>Guam (USAF)</u>	<u>Total</u>
F-4	40	183	50	-	273
RF-4	22	40	-	-	62
F-5	-	15	-	-	15
F-8	-	15	25	-	40
RF-8	-	4	7	-	11
F-100	-	205	-	-	205
RF-101	17	13	-	-	30
F-102	12	12	-	-	24
F-104	17	-	-	-	17
F-105	135	-	-	-	135
A-1	18	21	12	-	51
EA-1	-	-	3	-	3
A-3	-	-	12	-	12
A-4	-	81	95	-	176
RA-5	-	-	6	-	6
A-6	-	12	9	-	21
EA-6	-	5	-	-	5
A-26	8	-	-	-	8
T-28	11	-	-	-	11
B-52	-	-	-	50	50
B-57	-	20	-	-	20
RB-57	-	3	-	-	3
EB-66	21	-	-	-	21
Total	<u>301</u>	<u>629</u>	<u>219</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>1,199</u>

C. US Deployments and Expenditures in Thailand

1. The number of US troops in Thailand has grown from some 4,200 in June 1964 to some 34,781 by 26 December 1966. USAF forces presently account for 77 percent of the US strength. Army forces, which constitute most of the remainder of US strength in Thailand, consist of two engineer battalions, a logistical command, and various other units that serve as advisers to the Thai military and fly helicopters that transport Thai troops. See Table III for additional information.

Table III

U.S. Military Personnel in Thailand by Service

	<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy *</u>	<u>Airforce</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>1964</u>				
January	2,946	152	1,116	4,214
June	3,052	180	1,103	4,335
<u>1965</u>				
January	3,357	187	3,134	6,678
June	3,556	201	6,039	9,796
<u>1966</u>				
January	5,204	227	10,130	15,561
June	6,909	512	17,222	24,643
December	7,695	360	26,726	34,781

* Includes Coast Guard and Marines.

The Current Plan (DOD deployment schedules) indicates that US troop strength will not substantially increase over current levels by 1968. See table IV below:

Table IV

Actual and Projected Deployments of US Military Personnel in Thailand
1965 - 1968

(in thousands)

	<u>1965</u>		<u>1966</u>		<u>1967</u>		<u>1968</u>
	<u>June</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>June</u>
<u>Army</u>							
Current Plan	N.A	N.A	6.3	8.6	10.3	10.5	10.6
Actual	3.6	4.8	6.9	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A
<u>Navy *</u>							
Current Plan	N.A	N.A	N.A	.3	.3	.3	.3
Actual	.2	.2	.5	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A
<u>Airforce</u>							
Current Plan	N.A	N.A	20.8	25.6	27.4	27.5	27.5
Actual	6.0	9.1	17.2	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A
<u>Total</u>							
====							
Current Plan	N.A	N.A	27.1	34.5	37.7	38.3	38.4
Actual	9.8	14.1	24.6	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A

* Includes Coast Guard and Marines.

2. Construction expenditures for military facilities in Thailand are shown

below:

Table V

Summary of U.S. Military Construction by Country
As of 1 November 1966 (Dollars in Thousands)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Current Working Estimate</u>	<u>Percent</u>
S. Vietnam	\$ 1,211,582	67
Thailand	228,367	13
United States	165,724	9
Okinawa	73,301	} ----- 11
Philippines	71,156	
Taiwan	26,205	
Guam	14,875	
Japan	12,855	
Midway	1,576	
Wake	1,626	
Cuba	173	
Puerto Rico	130	
Total	\$ 1,807,570	100
	=====	***

TOP SECRET AREA

D. Use of B-52's.

Since 1965 B-52's based on Guam have bombed targets in South Vietnam, Laos, and North Vietnam. These raids primarily have been against suspected enemy troop emplacements and base areas. To date the B-52's in South Vietnam have not been used in a strategic bombing role. Only 4 percent of the B-52 flights have been flown over North Vietnam, and about 10 percent over Laos. Table VI gives a more detailed account of the raids.

Table VI

Distribution of B-52 Strikes - Southeast Asia
17 June 1965 - 27 December 1966

<u>Country</u>	<u>Missions</u>	<u>Sorties</u>
North Vietnam	15	224
Laos	86	663
South Vietnam	640	5,568
Total	769 ===	6,712 =====

Fear of SAMs _____ have restricted B-52 operations to infrequent raids over the extreme southern portions of North Vietnam. These raids, much like the raids over Laos, struck against the road network. It has become general practice to restrict B-52 raids to areas where the giant bombers are not within range of SAMs. Currently there are 50 B-52's operating out of Guam, future plans indicate that ultimately 70 B-52's may be used in the Vietnam war. It would appear that any future use of B-52's would be largely restricted to operations within South Vietnam. The use of a Thai base for B-52 strikes against South Vietnam

would shorten the 12 hour round trip from Guam to about 2-1/2 hours and permit a more rapid reaction time for ground support operations in South Vietnam.

(The round trip distance from Guam to DMZ is 5,200 statute miles; from Ban U-Tapo, the Thai base, to DMZ is about 1,000 miles.) The security (freedom from mortar attacks and VC raids) of Thai bases makes this area more convenient than similar facilities in South Vietnam.

The cost of B-52 operations also would be reduced sharply. Operating costs of the B-52 raids from Guam at the current level of 400 sorties per month are 10.4 million dollars. The same number of sorties flown from Thailand would cost about 2.2 million dollars.

The B-52's would be based at the U-Tapo-Ban Sattahip complex, an American-built facility complete with port, airfields and connecting petroleum facilities on the Gulf of Siam. The new airfields with two 11,500 foot runways and parallel taxiways, 75 feet wide and nearly the length of the runway, became operational last summer. Fuel and lubricant lines are being laid to the port, where a wharf that will berth several ships will be built.



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